

PRESS RELEASE

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**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC)**

The European Union remains gravely concerned about the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the wider dangers for the region as a whole from the escalation of the conflict. The EU recalls its declarations of 11 August and 19 August and reiterates its view that the current conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, involving several neighbouring countries, can only be solved through a negotiated settlement acceptable to all Congolese that will allow the DRC and other countries of the region to find the peace and stability that are prerequisites for their development.

The European Union welcomes African initiatives to find a peaceful solution to the conflict and therefore strongly supports the recent mediation efforts undertaken by Mr Nelson Mandela in his capacity as Chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and - in a larger context - in the framework of the OAU, and calls on all parties to participate.

In this context the EU joins the call of the SADC Summit of 23 August for an immediate cease-fire. This would be a precondition for a political process leading to negotiations aimed at finding a solution to the conflict. The EU remains ready to help the political dialogue, which could take place in the framework of a peace conference for the DRC with support by the international community, bringing together all involved actors. Along these lines the EU stands ready to support any negotiation scheme finding the consent of all parties involved, inter alia through the assistance of the EU Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. A regional conference could remain necessary as a second step at a later stage to consider issues of a regional dimension and to create mechanisms promoting security and cooperation.

10856/98 (Presse 280 - G)

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The EU once again reiterates its support for the principle of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Congo and its neighbouring countries and calls for a cessation of external interference in the DRC. The Union further condemns acts of violence against civilians and any actions having a direct impact on the population, like hate propaganda against specific ethnic groups or activities causing unnecessary suffering, as for instance the interruption of the provision of electricity that has severe humanitarian and sanitarian consequences.

The Central and Eastern European countries and Cyprus associated with the European Union and the EFTA countries, members of the European Economic Area align themselves with this declaration.
